

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2016 FROM 7.30 PM TO 9.40 PM

Members Present

Councillors: Bob Pitts (Mayor), Rob Stanton (Deputy Mayor), Mark Ashwell, Alistair Auty, Keith Baker, Parry Batth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Prue Bray, UllaKarin Clark, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Kate Haines, Mike Haines, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, John Halsall, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Tim Holton, Philip Houldsworth, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Abdul Loyes, Charles Margetts, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Ken Miall, Stuart Munro, Ian Pittock, Barrie Patman, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Beth Rowland, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Bill Soane, Alison Swaddle, Paul Swaddle, Simon Weeks, Oliver Whittle and Shahid Younis

39. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors David Chopping, Emma Hobbs, John Jarvis, Dianne King, David Lee, Philip Mirfin and Chris Singleton.

40. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 July 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillors Jones and Ferris stated that they had not received answers to questions asked at the previous meeting. The relevant Executive Members agreed to respond.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ian Pittock declared a Personal Interest in Item 48.3 Motion 387 on the grounds that his partner was a tax accountant who advised local businesses. Councillor Pittock remained in the Chamber during the discussion of the Motion but did not vote on the matter.

42. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Mayor invited members of the public to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

42.1 Guy Grandison asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

How much overlap time was there between the end of the Loddon Viaduct works and the start of the A327 scheme?

Answer

The A327 Arborfield Road closure commenced at 9pm on Friday 19 August 2016 and the A3290 Loddon Viaduct works contraflow system was lifted at 4:30am on Saturday morning. So yes, there was an overlap of 7 hours 30 minutes, in the middle of the night.

The Council was hoping obviously to avoid an overlap altogether, however a very slight over run of the Loddon Viaduct works meant that that overlap did occur but at least we were able to keep it to after 9 o'clock at night when the traffic flows are very much reduced and cause minimum, if any problem.

Supplementary Question

7 hours 30 minutes in the middle of the night, that is very well done. Does the Executive Member agree though that in spite of these roadworks we have had in the Borough over the summer; there will be long term benefits for the motorists of the Borough?

Supplementary Answer

You would hope so if you were doing road improvement schemes that you would hope to have an improvement and a benefit.

43. PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF THAMES VALLEY POLICE, FRANCIS HABGOOD

The Council received a presentation from Francis Habgood, Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police about the relationship between Thames Valley Police and Wokingham Borough. In his presentation the Chief Constable referred to the four key pillars which underpinned Thames Valley Police's commitment to working together with communities:

- Emergency services keeping people safe and bringing offenders to justice;
- Working together to build stronger, more resilient communities;
- Modern policing meeting the needs of communities;
- Skilled and trusted workforce.

He also referred to the priorities for 2016/17 including: cutting crimes of most concern; protecting vulnerable people; and bringing offenders to justice. The Chief Constable also outlined the situation for Wokingham in particular and stated that on the whole crime was low in the area.

Following the presentation, Members asked a number of questions relating to:

- Progress with sharing facilities with other Blue Light services and other public bodies;
- Approval of the Highways England application to convert the M4 between Junctions 3 and 12 into a Smart motorway and the impact this would have on local traffic;
- Uncollected road traffic offence fines for overseas registered vehicles;
- Future funding of the Community Safety Partnerships and the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership in particular;
- Rural crime;
- Domestic violence and the support provided by the Police to victims and perpetrators;
- Use of firearms to carry out illegal poaching and to intimidate residents living in rural locations.

The Chief Constable answered these questions at the meeting.

Members thanked the Chief Constable for his presentation.

44. PETITIONS

The following member of the public presented a petition in relation to the matter indicated.

The Mayor's decision as to the action to be taken is set out against the petition.

Mr Clive Chaffer	<p>Mr Chaffer presented a petition of over 100 signatures regarding the safety of pedestrians crossing on Rose Street.</p> <p><i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport</i></p>
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45. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed Members of the Passing Out Parade of Fire Fighter Recruits which he had attended and highlighted the demonstration he had received of what would happen when water was poured on to a chip pan fire. The Mayor agreed to send the picture of the result to Members.

Prue Bray informed Council that she would be standing down as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group due to other commitments within the Party. She stated that she had enjoyed her time as Group Leader and wished her successor every success for the future.

46. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Council considered the Treasury Management Annual Report 2015/16 as set out on pages 35 to 68 of the agenda.

Anthony Pollock in presenting the report commended the performance of the In-House team which had outperformed the specialists in investments.

It was proposed by Anthony Pollock and seconded by Stuart Munro that the recommendations contained within the report be agreed.

RESOVLED: That:

- 1) it be noted that the report was presented to the Audit Committee on 15 June 2016 and Executive on 28 July 2016;
- 2) the following be approved:
 - a) the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2015/2016; and
 - b) the actual 2015/2016 prudential indicators within the report.

47. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Council considered proposed changes to the Constitution as set out on Agenda pages 69 to 76 relating to the Filming and Recording Protocol and the designation of the Head of Governance and Improvement Services as the Officer responsible for the discharge of functions of Counting Officer at a Neighbourhood Plan Referendum.

Prue Bray informed Members that following a challenge the Local Government Ombudsman had recommended that filming also be allowed at all public meetings organised by the Council. Members of the public, however, could still request that they not be filmed.

It was proposed by Paul Swaddle and seconded by Prue Bray that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

RESOLVED: That the following changes to the Constitution, as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group, be agreed:

- 1) a revised Chapter 3.6 – Filming and Recording Protocol as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- 2) designation of the Head of Governance and Improvement Services as the Officer responsible for the discharge of functions of Counting Officer at a Neighbourhood Plan Referendum.

48. STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, AND DEPUTY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Councillor Keith Baker, Leader of the Council

Prior to his statement, the Leader thanked Prue Bray for her contribution as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and wished her all the best.

I first need to inform Council that the item relating to “Proposed Reduction to Speed Limits on sections of B3349 Barkham Road, Bearwood Road and Sheerlands Road to Support Access and Walked Route to New Bohunt School, Arborfield” was taken as an urgent Executive decision on 1 September and as such was not subject to call in. This was undertaken in accordance with the Constitution and with agreement of the Mayor. The item was deemed urgent because Bohunt School was due to open on 5 September and any delay in implementing the speed limits could risk the safety of school children walking to the new School.

I also want to announce that due to work pressures Councillor Chris Smith has had to step down from his role as Deputy Executive Member for Children Services. I thank him for his all but brief efforts and wish him well for the future. I am very pleased to announce that Councillor Richard Dolinski has agreed to take on this role. Councillor Dolinski is a former Deputy Head, has a lot to offer and is already making an impact.

But I now want to use the rest of my speech to discuss a different but very important topic; the budget for 2017/18 and beyond. This year a lot of attention is being paid to putting together a more detailed 3 year budget to align with the Government’s offer of a 4 year settlement. As with everything the devil is in the detail. That detail masks a highly damaging reduction in grant in 2019/20, in that one year alone, of £7.1million, which is probably the largest drop this Council has ever seen, all in the year when councils are meant to be retaining, in full, their business rates. We have already started the work needed to address that issue but this year we need to find savings of over £4million which is slightly higher than the current year. So how are we going to do it? I expect Councillor Pollock will spend time in his speech providing more detail on this, but part of our solution is in my portfolio, which is something we are calling the 21st Century Council. For those who are interested in more detail, can I refer them to the Executive agenda for later this month where the business case can be found. This is a 2 year programme and will result in a dramatic change in how this Council carries out its affairs. This alone will provide just over £2million of savings for this coming year, which will be a major contribution to that £4million savings target. I will be bringing updates back to Council as the work

progresses, but tonight I want to speak to you about the principles underpinning these changes.

We all acknowledge, or I hope we do, that we simply cannot carry on as things are. The challenges to our finances are set to continue for years to come, and it is essential that we remodel this Council and its responsibilities to make it suitable for the needs of our times. As such, we have carried out a fundamental review of how the Authority is structured and the services it provides. This has allowed us to completely rebuild the Council, from the foundations of what we want it to be, all the way up to how our Officers will do it. At the heart of the technical information are two core principles: responsible government and responsive government.

A responsible Council carries out our statutory services, lean but effective in delivering the essentials for residents. At the same time, it means recognising that the authority has to adapt to meet the needs of its residents. That is where the second principle comes in. With the foundations of our statutory services, as a responsive Council we must keep open a dialogue with our residents, shaping all of our services and deciding which non-statutory functions we want to fully fund. We need to introduce processes to ensure the greatest possible level of feedback from our residents on the effectiveness and the desirability of our policies and programmes. We need objective assessments of what services will best meet the needs of the residents at this time, and how these services will do this. And we need to understand where a service would be more effectively delivered or funded in a different way – through our companies for example or a third party. It is a key Conservative idea that from time to time we review our institutions, identify what works, and change what does not. Our 21st Century Council proposals, as you will see over the coming months, are radical yet stay true to the spirit of this evolutionary reform.

Councillor Anthony Pollock, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance

We are currently almost halfway between the budget setting Council meetings of 2016 and 2017 and so it is a good time to reflect on the past year. The Financial Accounts are nearly complete and the revenue budget overspend has not changed since it was reported to the Executive earlier in the municipal year. It remains at a small overspend of £454,000 or 0.35% of the net revenue budget of £128 million. The main reasons for the overspend is the rise in homelessness and the need to place children in expensive, specialist residential care. Both these categories are demand led which means if people come to us and meet the qualifying requirements then we are required to spend the money to meet their needs. We are not a spendthrift authority and therefore we only spend tax payers' money where necessary.

The Capital Programme was £111million and was underspent by £1,871 and I will not give you the percentage because it is so infinitesimal. There was a carry forward of £62,000 to complete some projects in the current financial year, which were started the last one.

The Council continues to top the council tax collection league tables, collecting 99.5% against our neighbouring authorities who collected between 96.5% and 98.9%. To put this in context, the additional 3% between 96.5% and 99.5% equates to nearly £4million. We collected 99.1% of our Business Rates which regrettably puts us 50th out of 326 local authorities. I would like to be higher up but never mind. Our neighbours collected less than we did; 97.1% to 98.9%, which again putting it in context, something around 2% is about £1million extra that we collect because of our good team. The Finance Team therefore collected about an extra £5million per annum when compared to the worst

collection rates of our neighbouring Berkshire authorities, a significant sum when put in context of the Budget.

During the year we finalised the collection of 98.4% of the £5million we had with Icelandic banks back in 2008. At the time I thought we would collect 95% of the amount outstanding so I am especially pleased to have exceeded that target.

Last time we undertook for the first time an exercise in budget engagement with the public and we plan for a repeat of the exercise this year between 17 and 31 October. I would ask you to publicise these events so that we can increase the number of residents attending.

As our Leader has said in his speech, the details of next year's budget are currently being worked up. We have had a tight financial settlement, a 4 year settlement, which is on offer as a quasi-guarantee from the Government, which means they will tell us they guarantee it but they might change their mind if the numbers do not add up for them in future. We will be taking a paper to Executive next week in order to do our best to ensure that they do not take money away from us unnecessarily. The challenges looking ahead are far harder than we normally face since we have already saved £31million since 2010. As Keith has talked about the 21st Century Council Project, which is our response to this increased challenge. I would remind Members that we face having our Rate Support Grant eliminated completely and the prospect in 2019/20 of a £7million negative Rate Support Grant, highly unfair but that is the prospect. Fortunately we were successful in lobbying this year for transitory relief over the next 2 years and for the removal of the negative Rate Support Grant in 2019. I will continue to lobby for the remaining proposed negative Rate Support Grant for 2019/20 to be removed and for retention of more than £6million of the £60million in business rates which we are supposed to be retaining more of our business rates, but we seem to end up retaining less. However, we will rise to the challenge and continue to successfully balance the books, notwithstanding the challenges we face.

Councillor Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Children's Services

I want to take this minute to congratulate our pupils for all their endeavours, their dedicated teaching and support staff, governors, parents and carers for supporting them to achieve their potential and move smoothly on to the next steps, whether it be A Levels, college, apprenticeships or university and other pathways. Our GCSE students yet again bucked the national trend of falling passes and again achieved higher grades than last summer's cohort. This is now the third year in a row that our GCSE students have improved their GCSE passes. This year for students getting five or more A* to C grades including English and Maths, the results rose by over 2.8%, taking the percentage to 70.6%. Over the next two years we can all look forward to getting our heads around a new set of measures called Progress 8 which will replace the GCSE gradings.

Our A level students have a lot to celebrate too with their results when they came out in August. They also achieved results which were above the national average and all of our Borough schools achieved at least 98% of the pass rate and both Waingels College in Woodley and The Piggott in Wargrave, both achieved a 100% pass rate.

Over the summer break the Council also received findings of inspections of our Youth Offending Service. I will quote just a couple of paragraphs of this report to give you a flavour of the Inspector's conclusions:

“Wokingham Youth Offending Service were undertaking highly effective work with children and young people. Case managers were skilled, experienced and motivated to support children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.”

Later on the report goes on, “the level of compliance by children and young people was excellent. We saw creative work being carried out in all cases which promoted engagement. All children and young people who had complied fully with their orders and there were no reoffending or instances of returning orders to court for non-compliance.” It is an excellent report reflecting the real skills, strength and leaderships in this team and the outcomes it is producing. I would like to thank and praise those working in this service who are affecting real change in the lives of our young people.

Lastly, I was excited on Friday to be attending the celebration to unveil the plaque, formally marking the start of Bohunt Secondary School, the first new secondary school that this Authority has built for more than 50 years. This is a remarkable and significant achievement that everyone can be rightly proud of, and I know that the new students who are experiencing their very first days in this innovative school are excited and learning lots of new things. The learning opportunities on offer there are superb and I wanted to sign up to all of the after school clubs, building robots and learning new languages, and I am sure that everyone else there was extremely excited as well.

Councillor Angus Ross, Executive Member for Environment

During the summer there was a lot of activity organised through our splendid Sports Development Team for children's activities with emphasis on reaching those most in need of support.

Another exciting way youngsters in and around Finchampstead could have fun and exercise was at the new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) which opened at the start of the summer holidays. This has proved extremely popular and is an exemplar of the new open multi activity MUGAs which I hope we can develop to install later around our SDLs. Thanks to the Deputy Mayor, Rob Stanton we had a good official opening on 25 August.

During that period we conducted a comprehensive consultation in Woodley on options for the future of Bulmershe Leisure Centre. We plan to bring forward our proposals soon so we can then develop the specification and work with users and the other site occupants, including Bulmershe and Addington Schools and Woodley Town Council as well as local residents, as not only will there need to be careful planning on site but also the need to try to provide the best alternative access to facilities during any works.

Further, during the summer we hosted the first Marvellous Festival in Dinton Pastures on the weekend after our last Council meeting. This was a great success on all counts, including the weather. Plans for future festivals are underway and we will be consulting with the residents close to Dinton to get feedback from them and also propose improvements for any future similar events. In future years we should gain significant financial surpluses.

July saw the contract for our grass cutting and maintenance of our open spaces settle down to its agreed routine - cutting where necessary rather than every 'x' weeks. The many discussions we had with residents has ensured a more comprehensive understanding of the local needs of each location, whilst accepting we will never please everyone, whatever regime is put in place. Balancing the needs of children's informal play

areas, dog walkers and increased opportunities for biodiversity will always challenge us but I believe we have a much better understanding of this now.

To ensure we have robust effective and maintained sustainable drainage schemes in new housing developments, we have been consulting on our new strategy. The consultation finished last week and we will study the responses and plan to come forward with an even better strategy for adoption later this year. This work is at the forefront of strategies across the country and will better inform developers in our Borough before even coming to the Council for pre-application discussions and will also give our Planning Officers informed reference to the drainage requirements for each site.

My Deputy, Parry Batth, has been working on various energy and climate change opportunities which he will bring to the Council at our next meeting.

Councillor Malcolm Richards, Executive Member for Highways and Transport

In 2015, we decided that Wokingham Borough Council would seek to adopt Civil Parking Enforcement, or CPE, as an alternative to the Police having responsibility for our parking matters. That decision was progressed and approved by the Executive, and several actions have taken place along the way to achieve the necessary status for CPE submission to the Secretary of State for Transport. I am now pleased to say that next week I will be presenting our formal CPE application to the Executive for approval to submit that CPE application to the Secretary of State.

Secondly, I would also like to inform Council that the Wokingham Railway Station and Station Link Road Redevelopment has won the Urbanisation Award from the Institute of Civil Engineers and they received their award recently at the Institution Civil South East England Award Ceremony. I would like to put on record our congratulations to the team from the Highways Department for that success.

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen, Executive Member for Resident Services

Just a couple of announcements. We have in the last few days introduced an Apple and Android app. It allows residents to report problems on their mobile devices. I would be very pleased if everyone would download it to their mobile devices and use it. We have had 8,277 households so far sign up for mobile accounts. We are also getting a lot of success in Web Chat.

Second thing that I wanted to mention is that libraries continue to hit the headlines, in a positive way. On Thursday it was announced that the Council's Children's Librarian, Elizabeth McDonald has been named as the 'Librarian of the Year' by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in recognition of her work with children, young people and their families. She also got an award from the Mayor so I would like to congratulate her very much on that award; she has done brilliantly.

We also hosted the first visit by Rob Wilson, in his role as Minister for Libraries, which was very good and we are continuing to discuss with this department innovations that they can suggest to help develop our libraries further.

We are working with West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forrest Council on a new Public Protection Shared Service Agreement which we hope will save between £50-70K a year to Wokingham Borough Council on top of the £150k we already save on the current scheme.

Finally, I would like to join Keith in thanking Prue for all her efforts as Leader. Whilst we do not always agree on everything, I do respect your passion and commitment and wish you all the best in the future.

49. STATEMENT FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES

Councillor Gary Cowan, Non-Executive Director Loddon Homes Limited

Having achieved full for Profit Registered Provider Status with the Homes and Communities Agency, Loddon Homes have been focusing on continuing to prepare for future affordable houses, while ensuring that the management and maintenance of our existing 16 homes remain effective. In preparation for the next batch of homes we are working closely with Wokingham Housing Limited and the Holding Company to look at the best arrangements around our housing company structure and where best to place the assets.

The new housing policy that the Government has introduced means we must look at how best we manage these new risks within the council housing companies. We continue to work on producing a full suite of policies and procedures as Loddon Homes Limited evolves having approved a further three policies at our last Board meeting. In association with this work we are also working on the details of how best to let the first homes on Phoenix Avenue and Fosters Extra Care Schemes with Wokingham Borough Council's Housing Services and the precise management arrangement for Fosters with Wokingham Borough Council and Optalis.

Our Board meetings always include an item on key performance indicators on how existing homes are being managed. Based on existing targets, we are up-to-date and performance is looking well to target.

Lastly, Loddon Homes submitted a bid for a grant for shared ownership homes to the HCA's Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes programme on 2nd September. In total we bid for £1.5million of grant to support 18 shared ownership homes we are hoping to build in 2017/18, followed by a further 60 homes based on 15 homes a year thereafter. Any grant we receive will help the Council's committed sums for developers go further and produce more affordable homes overall. We shall hear if a bid for a grant will be successful in December and I will keep Council updated on progress.

Councillor Alistair Auty, Non-Executive Director Wokingham Housing Limited

I will keep my update brief in the absence of the Chair David Chopping who is away this evening. I would just also like to pass on our congratulations to our sister company Loddon Homes in achieving Registered Provider Status from the HCA, a feather in the cap of the Borough and well deserved.

We continue to progress well with our flagship schemes of Phoenix Avenue and Fosters. In addition we have just submitted eight smaller sites for Executive approval at the end of this month. That will positively result in additional capacity and additional affordable homes being delivered into the Borough in the next year, which I think is a positive as well.

Councillor Anthony Pollock, Non-Executive Director Optalis

First I would like to report on a new contract which has been awarded to Optalis for a residential care facility in Maidenhead by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. This contract commenced on 1 September and incorporation of this contract into Optalis

has gone smoothly to date. I am pleased to have won this piece of business from a neighbouring local authority.

Second, I would like to report on a customer story. I would like to report on a customer story which illustrates the work that Optalis undertakes and the benefit it gives to vulnerable residents. Steve and Jackie Bastow who are residents at Oakfield Court, a supported living scheme for people with learning disabilities in Wokingham, have just celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. The couple met at Derwen Training College, a specialist residential training facility in Oswestry in 1980, where Jackie was training to be a dressmaker and Steve was training to be a cobbler. They were engaged in 1981 but when they left their residential college in 1982 they lived in different parts of the country due to their disabilities and I presume their different parent local authorities, and could only meet in the holidays. They were determined to stay together however and married in 1986, moving to Oakfield Court in the same year. Steve and Jackie have overcome several obstacles in their lives including health issues, in addition to the challenges arising from their learning disabilities. Jackie had to go into hospital in 2000 and Steve had to have a major heart operation in the summer of 2014. However, Steve said recently that he currently never felt better and they were gearing up for their next adventure as they were off to Greece, I am told, for the nineteenth time travelling to Corfu with an organised group. This year is also the 30th anniversary of Oakfield Court which was celebrated in August. Jackie says "I am so grateful to Optalis for everything they have helped me to achieve. Oakfield Court has helped people with learning and other disabilities over the last 30 years and we are very happy here."

50. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Mayor invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

50.1 Gary Cowan asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

In an email to me in June you stated that "*we have recently published our Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Strategic Housing Market Assessment which gives us our (OAN) objectively assessed need up to 2036 of 856 homes to be built per annum.*

Can you please let me know when this was agreed by the Council as Officers have advised me that "this has been agreed by Council Members and Officers who were part of the SHMA Member Reference Group" as I cannot remember this ever being discussed at Council or Executive.

Answer

Thank you for your question which is very interesting as the responsible Executive Member for the existing Core Strategy you already have a great understanding of the process to create a Local Plan, the new name for a Core Strategy. I was not personally involved in anything to do with the SHMA but I have carried out a lot of research to provide answers to your question.

As you know, the National Planning Policy Framework, the famous NPPF published in 2012 now requires all authorities to work out what their Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAN) is, through the SHMA.

On 24 September 2015, the then Deputy Executive Member for Planning, Councillor Halsall took the LDS, that is the Local Development Scheme, report to Executive to gain approval for the Local Development Scheme. This included, amongst several other items,

and I quote:

“It will therefore set a refined housing target for the Borough from 2013 to 2036, having regard to the results of an objective assessment of housing needs.”

At the same time the Executive Member for Planning, at that time Councillor Kaiser, became a member of the SHMA Member Reference Group, that you reference in your question, which was a pan Berkshire group of all the Planning Lead Members of each authority. All lead members accepted the output of the consultants on the OAN.

The consequence of that agreement was two press releases issued on 20 October, 2015. One was a joint release which every Berkshire Authority issued. All press releases are not issued without the express agreement of the relevant Executive Member. This is important as the second one was exclusively from Wokingham Borough Council which had extensive quotes from Councillor Kaiser reflecting his agreement to release these numbers. Amongst all these quotes was:

“The SHMA is a highly technical document that objectively produces a figure for housing need, which is broadly indicative of potential housing numbers we may need to provide for. But we will want to consult and engage as widely as possible when it comes to the Local Plan.”

So that is the background. Councillor Halsall, the Deputy Executive Member for Planning, and Councillor Kaiser, Executive Member for Planning were the Councillors involved with the SHMA. It is correct that the SHMA did not go through the normal decision making process in exactly the same way that the equivalent in your Core Strategy did not.

So why not? Let me remind you as it is a long time since this process was followed for the Core Strategy, of the details. As Councillor Kaiser has said many times the OAN is a technical document. It is the opinion of consultants experienced in assessing housing needs for a council. Their opinion might not be correct and the methodology and assumptions can be questioned but it is a starting point.

However these numbers are not and I stress not, the Housing Target Number. The Housing Target Number is the number that gets “plugged into” the eventual Local Plan Update which will go forward to the public examination. So what is the difference? The Housing Target Number focuses around deliverability and generally results in a different number than the OAN. For example, if there are insufficient sustainable sites to reach the OAN number then your Housing Target Number will tend to be lower than the OAN. It does not mean the housing needs number is wrong simply they cannot be provided within the Borough. The Council will then look to their neighbours to see if they can assist in taking this shortfall. Excessive Green Belt land is another example for reducing the number of sustainable sites.

The Housing Target Number, which is the important one, will evolve over the next 12 months and that is the number which will go through the normal decision making process.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Derek Wilson, Cabinet Member for Planning at Windsor and Maidenhead said with respect to the SHMA “we are disappointed with the numbers for the Royal Borough because of the nature of the constraints in the Royal Borough and as a result we will need to have discussions with our neighbouring authorities as part of a duty to cooperate to take on potential housing.” I would add that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified Bracknell as needing 635 houses, West Berkshire 665, Reading 699 and finally

Wokingham topped the list with 856 houses, which would be scheduled every year for the next 20 years. This number is regarded in the document as the starting figure.

Will you as Leader of the Council join me in publicly condemning these outrageous housing numbers allocated to Wokingham Borough here and now and will you also publicly please state your opposition to these housing numbers and that this administration will fight them every step of the way?

Supplementary Answer

Can I correct you; the Leader of the Royal Borough has confirmed that the numbers are adequate. Interesting enough they are roughly the same as their current numbers, so unfortunately your data is not quite correct.

I will not publicly condemn a consultant number. A consultant was paid to do the job. They have done a job and the number that we will be working to will be the Housing Needs Target. We do not know what that number is. When that number comes out I will take my position whether I support it or not.

50.2 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

With the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement on the horizon will the Executive member for Highways agree to start working with local members to draw up a schedule and plans for where new parking arrangements will be required across the Borough?

Answer

A review commenced early in 2016 to look at the Borough's existing traffic regulation orders, road markings and the associated parking signs to ensure they are suitable to support CPE.

The review highlighted numerous improvements required to the existing TROs, to the road markings and the parking signs that needed to be implemented to ensure CPE could be enforced and that it would be robust if challenged via the parking appeals process. These improvements are being made before CPE goes live, which is currently programmed for the second half of 2017, subject of course to approval at the 28 September 2016 Executive.

With regard to new parking arrangements and changes to the existing arrangements it is considered this would be best assessed and quantified after CPE has been implemented and established, in other words we would do the existing ones first. As usual any changes or larger scale improvements to the existing arrangements would be done on a priority basis, and would subject to appropriate availability of resources and funding.

50.3 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

There have been suggestions in the press that the new Education Secretary Justine Greening is in favour of opening more grammar schools. Does the Conservative administration in Wokingham wish to see a return to grammar schools in the Borough?

Answer

The starting point for answering this question is to remind Councillor Jones that Wokingham's comprehensive schools maintained and academies are among the best in the country. We see their results continue to sustain massively high standards year after

year. In short pupils do well here.

There has been interest in the grammar school question since the recent development in Sevenoaks, Kent. This is where an existing grammar school was expanded in a new building on a new site. In Wokingham, as seen with many areas in our Council, we are prepared to look carefully at different ways of doing things.

If there were a change in the law reflecting the new Secretary of State's thinking, that might change the balance of pros and cons. We will work through the anticipated green paper when it is published. However it would not change my sense that we want to work with our schools and we are interested in our education system as a whole.

What we wish to see in Wokingham is children doing brilliantly. Our schools achieve that for our children and I salute them for that.

Supplementary Question

I agree with you. Wokingham children do extremely well but would you agree with me that there is no evidence that grammar schools increase social mobility, and significantly in the past have had a harm on the life chances and opportunities of 80% of young children who have not been able to go to grammar schools?

Supplementary Answer

I think there are different circumstances in different authorities. Here all of our schools do incredibly well for pupils and as I said to you, if this legislation goes through in Central Government, we would need to consider very carefully what it would mean for our own local circumstances here. We may not be able to influence what it actually means for us in terms of the fact that we have a Regional Schools Commissioner so we would need to consider later on down the line the pros and the cons and what it does mean for social mobility or not. At the moment our schools are doing an excellent job and I praise them for that.

50.4 Beth Rowland asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

The Liberal Democrats welcome the setting up of the new autism unit at St Crispin's, which will not only benefit students but also potentially provide better value for money than placing young people further away. Will you set up a cross-party working group to look at the opportunities for collaboration with other councils on placements for children with special needs to realise economies of scale and better control over quality and cost?

Answer

I am extremely appreciative of your cross-party support for the St Crispin's autism provision, and of course delighted too at the real commitment of St Crispin's to excellent and inclusive education. Planning special needs provision is a complex professional process. The autism unit and our other special needs provision for hearing impairment and speech and language needs are being considered under the umbrella of the Disability Strategy established under the Children's Services Directorate.

With the hearing impaired provision we have specifically committed to working with other Berkshire authorities to look at how the Berkshire sensory consortium works. This year in the Thames Valley review of Further Education Colleges, our Officers took the opportunity to seek recognition of the importance of regional planning for special needs.

So the principle of working across authority boundaries already operates here. I am not sure we need a working group on it therefore but special educational needs might in due course be a matter that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would take an interest in.

Supplementary Question

We have offered in the past to play our part in working parties for education and I am really sad that it has not been taken up and we have not been able to put our oar in.

Supplementary Answer

I know that you have taken an interest in working groups and you have actually taken part in some. There is a Multi-Academy Working Group about to launch. The terms of reference have been drawn up and I am not sure if the dates have been sent out but they were sent to Democratic Services this week, so you have got them and the invitation is there. There is cross party working, particularly education so I cannot understand why you make that assertion.

50.5 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration the following question:

In the past two years the Council has bought a number of properties in connection with the regeneration of Wokingham town centre. If the Council were to sell those properties today how much would they fetch compared to how much the Council paid for them?

Answer

In connection with Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration, there have been two properties or two areas purchased in the past 2 years – the land behind the old Don Beni restaurant on Denmark Street and 26 Peach Street.

The Council paid £814k for those two areas. If they were sold today for the purposes for which the Council acquired them, they would be valued in the order of £1,085k.

Supplementary Question

In the past the Council lost control of the town centre in Woodley because the property was sold off for short term profit, only to see the others make more money out of the properties. Will you guarantee that you will look into long term interests of the hard working rate payers in Wokingham since we are the lowest funded Council in the country, and will be zero funded when looking at council property holdings in the future?

Supplementary Answer

I guarantee that. The Council will make a decision on whether to hold or sell as we continue with our regeneration and beyond.

50.6 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance the following question:

Now that we have had three months since the EU Referendum vote (at the time of the Council meeting), can the Executive Member for Finance advise whether there has been any impact on Wokingham Borough Council as a result of the vote?

Answer

I think you asked me a similar question recently and my answer then was no and my answer today is no. The Thames Valley economy is currently in very good health.

Supplementary Question

Does that mean then that you have been given a guarantee that the European Structural and Investment Fund money that is due to come to the LEP between now and 2020 will be forthcoming?

Supplementary Answer

My understanding is that the Government has guaranteed to maintain funding that we would have otherwise got from the European Union up to 2020 so I would expect the answer to your question to be yes.

50.7 Tim Holton asked the Executive Member for the Environment the following question:

Does the Executive Member welcome the news that Dinton Pastures has been awarded a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence for the third year running?

Answer

Yes, very welcome and I must say a tribute to our team at Dinton. We have been working hard over the last few years to make that Country Park a place where as many people as possible can enjoy a wide range of activities. Our visitor numbers have increased significantly and the feedback we get is extremely positive with many visitors recognising the great value for money that it offers for a family day out as well as for those simply wanting some fresh air or to walk their dog or dogs. It is therefore extremely welcome that for the third year, we have received a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence especially as to qualify a business must maintain an overall bubble rating of at least four out of five and have a minimum number of reviews.

We are not complacent about this and are working on a five year plan that will see further improvements to the whole of the Countryside Services' offer including planned improvements to California Country Park currently out for consultation.

Supplementary Question

Please can you tell me what more the Council intends to do to ensure it remains an excellent Country Park?

Supplementary Answer

As Members are probably aware, we have a cross party working group which is looking at various opportunities we have both to improve what is done at the Country Parks and how we can improve the income so we can invest in them. I am very confident that we can continue to provide the services that have given us this award and yet further enhance them.

50.8 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for the Environment the following question:

Would the Executive Member explain the arrangements for our residents for continuing easy access to our Household Waste Recycling Centres from 1st July?

Answer

You say easy access and I think what we have done has not provided any issues. As of 1 July, the re3 recycling centres now only accept household waste from residents living in the three Boroughs.

The change was prompted by West Berkshire Council giving notice that it intended to stop

the annual payment of £500,000 to the partnership councils for waste delivered to re3 recycling centres by West Berkshire residents. The partnership felt that it is unfair to ask our council tax payers to fund waste management services for residents in other local authorities.

In order for onsite staff to check residency easily and enforce the access change, recycling centre visitor permits were sent to the 182,000 households in the re3 area for use by residents when visiting the Bracknell and Reading facilities.

All area residents are also able to use alternative forms of valid ID, like driving licence photocard, to access the recycling centres.

Considerable effort was put into communicating the changes, which resulted in widespread and continued coverage in the media including TV, radio, print publications, and news websites and on social media and in community-led publications. Recycling centre meet and greet staff have undergone communications training, which has been supplemented by onsite signage and leafleting, to ensure a consistent and accurate message.

Communications for the next phase of changes due on 30th of this month, the introduction of a commercial vehicle permit and charges for some non-household waste are now underway and additionally, we will be carrying out traffic lane upgrades to both sites to improve access.

51. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS

51.1 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

In my ward of Hawkedon there have been a series of motor accidents at the western mini roundabout at the junction of Rushey Way and Kilnsea Drive. Some of these have been reported at least and there have been many near misses as a result of drivers coming up and down the hill, not being aware of this roundabout junction. Please can you advise what measures can be done to make this mini roundabout more obvious, to slow down the traffic and to make it safer?

Answer:

The junction you are referring to is where Kilnsea joins Rushey Way in a T junction and at that junction there is a roundabout. The concerns of residents were that people tend to go quite quickly along Rushey Way and they suddenly come across the roundabout, if they do not know it is there, and they would like to be told a bit earlier that the roundabout is there so they can plan. They thought the signs, although they are already there were not as obvious to see because some of them would be hidden basically by bushes or a bus stop. In response to that request we took that sign and are moving it further down the road so it is in front of the bushes and in front of the bus stop, so it can be seen several seconds earlier; so that will be an improvement. However, I have to say that they also made comment that people go along the road very quickly because they drive fast expensive cars and they think it is wonderfully safe and they were driving badly. The message seems to be not so much to do with signs as drivers improving their standards and observing the regulations and speed limits.

51.2 Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

The Council publishes its formal notices like TROs (Traffic Regulation Orders) in the Reading Chronicle but that only covers a small part of the Borough and residents in Winnersh miss out on seeing them. Will you please place the notices that affect Winnersh and Wokingham and the rest of the Borough in the Wokingham Paper; which is the one that most of the residents actually read?

Answer:

In the absence of not really having a particular Portfolio Holder on that, the rationale for our placement of advertising, clearly the location and the distribution is one answer but it is also their circulation. We will look at that suggestion but it is unlikely as it is a very low circulation. It does not matter if it is going to Winnersh or wherever if only a few thousand read it or a few hundred people read it; but we will look at that and report back.

51.3 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

At the top of Carshalton Way there is a manhole cover just a few metres before the roundabout. The road around the manhole cover appears to be collapsing and there are a number of marks now on the manhole cover which is the bottom of different cars, lorries and vehicles. Could you have a look at this urgently and try to get the road repaired?

Answer:

The simple answer is yes. I have in fact been there and I have looked at those local roads. I have seen those pieces which are desirable for change. I have reported them back and they will be added to the list. Obviously because the nature of it, it will appear fairly high up the list, but that particular manhole cover is proud of the surface so it will be fairly high on the list.

51.4 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

There is a group of residents who live near the open space near Woodward Close which is by the new primary school and the primary school car park and they would like to plant some trees and bushes for screening, at their own expense, to cover areas which are left unscreened by the Council. They are happy to maintain what they plant and to take direction as to what can be planted and they have been trying to get the Council to give them an answer as to whether they can do this for some months. Rachelle and I have been trying on their behalf as well and we have not managed to get an answer. The best time to plant trees is about to start. Please could you look into it and if possible give them the green light?

Answer:

I have not been aware of this. Yes I will look into it and I will ensure that it is our land in the first place.

51.5 Beth Rowland asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

The new streetlights that have gone out throughout the District which significantly change the way streetlights have looked and the light that they give. I have had complaints from lots of residents in my ward saying that the lights are very bright for driving in, especially as the nights are getting darker quicker. As they drive from new lights to old lights there

are significant patches, not only on my road but in the ward where they change from the yellow lights to the new lights, making driving conditions very difficult. Could we have a look at the angling or whether those could be shaded in any way for motorists?

Answer:

Yes, with the new lights going up there are various things they can adjust; they can angle them. They are obviously set to a standard when they are installed but they are able to be adjusted if necessary, but we need to be told which ones would seem to be out of step or a problem. Similarly with the brightness, they can be adjusted far more readily than the old lights and again we need to be told what problems if any, people have on the level of adjustment because we can turn at certain times of the day to reduce consumption or to avoid it shining into people's bedrooms and so on. We just need to be aware of them and if you would like to, separately, remind me of the occasions we will pass that on.

52. MOTIONS

52.1 Motion 385 submitted by Ian Pittock

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Ian Pittock and seconded by Lindsay Ferris.

"This Council believes in transparency and on this basis resolves it will now publish allowances Members receive from Outside Bodies and other organisations to which they are appointed by WBC. Such allowances will be shown on the same WBC web page alongside those received from this Council."

Ian Pittock emphasised that the onus was on Members to advise Democratic Services should they receive allowances from Outside Bodies and other organisations to which they were appointed by the Council.

Following debate, upon being put to the meeting, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

RESOLVED: That this Council believes in transparency and on this basis resolves it will now publish allowances Members receive from Outside Bodies and other organisations to which they are appointed by WBC. Such allowances will be shown on the same WBC web page alongside those received from this Council.

52.2 Motion 386 submitted by Lindsay Ferris

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (g) of the Council's Constitution, Lindsay Ferris proposed that Motion 386 be withdrawn.

52.3 Motion 387 submitted by Clive Jones

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Clive Jones and seconded by Prue Bray.

"This Council notes that:

- corporate tax evasion and avoidance are having a damaging impact on the world's poorest countries, to such a level that it is costing them far more than they receive in aid.
- this is costing the UK as much as £30bn a year.
- this practice also has a negative effect on small and medium-sized companies who pay more tax proportionately.

This Council further notes:

- that the UK Government has taken steps to tackle the issue of tax avoidance and evasion by issuing Procurement Policy Note 03/14 (PPN 03/14). This applies to all central government contracts worth more than £5m.
- the existence of voluntary schemes promoting tax compliance such as the Fair Tax Mark, which can serve as an independent means of verification.
- the 2015 Public Contract Regulations which state (in section 4) that local government can choose to adopt Procurement Policy Note 03/14.

This Council believes that bidders for Council contracts should be asked to account for their past tax record, using the higher standards in PPN 03/14 and therefore calls for procurement procedures to be amended to require all companies bidding for contracts worth more than £500,000 to self-certify that they are fully tax-compliant in line with central government practice using the standards in PPN 03/14, applying to contracts of the size specified above.

This Council asks the Executive to publicise this policy and to report on its implementation annually.”

Following debate, upon being put to the meeting, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to be lost.

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